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ABSTRACT

To parallel a study done by Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961), data were gathered from first, sixth, and tenth grade students about television viewing during a week in early May, 1970. Results of analyses of the data suggest several points: Compared to children in the same age group ten years ago, children are spending more time watching television; differences in viewing time today seem less marked across comparisons between socio-economic status and ability groups; students have become more skeptical about the medium's content and have become more overtly hostile to commercials; television viewing is usually accompanied by other activities rather than being the center of attention. It was also found that the importance of television declines in the adolescent years when children develop new social relationships and increasingly turn to music; the programs viewed by children are primarily programs produced for adult or family audiences, not specifically for children; cartoons, re-runs, and old movies are among the most popular with young children; and parental control of viewing appears to be a relatively weak factor, especially with children over six years of age. (SH)

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TELEVISION IN THE DAILY LIVES OF CHILDREN

by

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A paper read as part of the symposium, The Early Window: The Role of Television in Childhood, at the meeting of the American Psychological Association in Washington September 4, 1971

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TELEVISION IN THE DAILY LIVES OF CHILDREN

Jack Lyle and Heidi R. Hoffman

This session has been titled "The Early Window: The Role of Television in Childhood." Our colleagues will develop the discussion of what the child does with what he sees through that window and what the effects of that stimuli may be. It is our purpose to establish a framework of how much time the child spends at the window and what it is that he watches through it.

In attempting to do this we will draw principally from a field study we conducted in a town on the fringes of the Los Angeles complex. We will refer from time to time to several other studies in this same series which also gathered data on viewing behavior.

Our study was designed to parallel the 1959 studies of Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961). Let us emphasize that we said parallel, not duplicate. Some questions were the same, some were changed, some dropped, some added. But the age groups were the same: first, sixth and tenth grades.*

Data--including previous day viewing for the school week--was gathered from the sixth and tenth graders using self-administered questionnaires. Individual interviews and one-day viewing records were gathered from a 25% sample of the first grade--274 youngsters. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 114 first grade mothers. Because of absences, the number of older students varied from day to day. Generally we were dealing with over 800 sixth graders

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*The study is now being expanded to encompass pre-school age children and their mothers. The field work on these children is still underway and so no data is presently ready to be reported.

and about 500 tenth graders each day.*

The field work was conducted in early May, 1970. This, it should be noted, was after the end of the regular "season" on television.

There is hardly a child in this country who does not have access to a TV set. The 1970 Census estimates that 96% of all American homes contain a TV. Among our students the figure was 98%. Increasingly, there are two or more television "windows" in the home, particularly if there are older children. Thus while only 29% of our first graders had more than one set in their home, 61% of the tenth graders did. And the picture they saw was very likely to be in "living color"--over half the first graders said they had a color set and the figure was higher among older students.

How much time does the child spend looking through this television window? This is a complex matter and we advise against thinking in terms of measures of central tendency. There is great variation in viewing time between groups and also for the same individual from day to day.

Further, it is specious to think of <u>the</u> "child audience." Patterns of viewing time and program selection change almost from year to year so that there are very different audiences at different ages of childhood and adolescence.

Having stipulated all these caveats, what can we say?

Murray (1971) has documented that children become purposeful viewers by the time they are three years of age, meaning that by that age they have established patterns of favorite programs and of viewing times.

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* The actual figures for each day were:

	6th	10th
Monday	877	491
Tuesday	858	483
Wednesday	793	469
Thursday	816	548
Friday	858	505

Sex differences, particularly in program preferences, are manifested by the time the child enters the first grade.

Most children do watch at least some television every day. Most watch for at least two hours, many may watch considerably longer. In our study town over a quarter of the sixth graders and only a slightly smaller proportion of the tenth graders watched at least 5 1/2 hours on a given school day (Table 1). About equal proportions spent no time before the set that day. Well over a third of the first graders watched for four hours or more, but the proportion of non-viewers was less than 10%. For older children, viewing time increased on Sundays.

Several things appear to happen to viewing patterns as the child grows older. The amount of time spent viewing builds to a peak somewhere around the period at which the child approaches adolescence. Then it begins a slow decline. This decline in the amount of viewing among teenagers appears primarily to reflect a decrease in daytime viewing.

For our younger children the late afternoon was a peak viewing period (Table 2). Almost two-thirds of the first graders and over half the sixth graders were at the sets just before dinner time. Tenth grade viewing, on the other hand, did not peak until prime time began, at 7 p.m., although a third of this older group also did some afternoon viewing.

Many younger children--a third of the first graders, a fifth of those in grade six--watched in the morning before going to school.

Most first graders had dropped out of the audience (and are in bed) by 9 p.m. The sixth grade audience began to decline at 9:30 p.m., but as many as 25% might still be watching as late as 11 p.m. The teenage audience held strong until 11 p.m. and then dropped to well under 20%.

Earlier studies (Schramm, et al, Greenberg and Dominick, for example) and some in this series (McIntyre and Robinson in particular) report differences in viewing time related to socio-economic status, intelligence and ethnic group membership. We did not find consistent

Table 1

CATEGORIES OF VIEWING TIME

	First Grade			Sixth Grade		Tenth Grade	
Sunday	Boys	Girls		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Up to 1:00	30%	31%	Up to 3:00	30%	30%	37%	38%
1:30 to 3:00	48	22	3:30 to 5:00	19	22	22	22
3:30 to 5:00	18	19	5:30 to 8:00	20	23	19	18
5:30 or more	4	28	8:30 or more	31	25	22	22
Wednesday							
No viewing	0%	11%	No viewing	30%	29%	25%	24%
0:30 to 2:00	13	30	0:30 to 3:00	24	24	37	30
2:30 to 3:30	43	30	3:30 to 5:00	21	20	16	19
4:00 or more	43	29	5:30 or more	25	27	22	26

Table 2

PROFILE OF SUNDAY VIEWING

% viewing at:	First Grade	Sixth Grade	Tenth Grade	% viewing at:	First Grade	Sixth Grade	Tenth Grade
7:00 a.m.	16%	19%	7%	3:30 p.m.	2%	21%	21%
7:30	24	14	5	4:00	5	24	23
8:00	38	35	13	4:30	16	33	26
8:30	40	34	16	5:00	20	41	38
9:00	24	32	15	5:30	22	34	31
9:30	25	33	17	6:00	24	36	38
10:00	25	34	18	6:30	14	35	38
10:30	29	37	24	7:00	31	41	36
11:00	38	37	28	7:30	44	57	48
11:30	22	29	21	8:00	38	56	49
12 NOON	18	30	23	8:30	25	60	54
12:30 p.m.	22	34	27	9:00	16	52	57
1:00	16	35	33	9:30	11	42	43
1:30	18	29	28	10:00	-	28	38
2:00	16	30	29	10:30	-	23	32
2:30	16	33	30	11:00	-	9	12
3:00	9	28	24	11:30	-	8	10

PROFILE OF WEEKDAY VIEWING

	First Grade				Sixth Grade				Tenth Grade			
	M	Tu	W	Th	M	Tu	W	Th	M	Tu	W	Th
7:00 a.m.	35%	24%	20%	29%	17%	15%	17%	16%	3%	7%	3%	6%
7:30	18	17	26	29	22	22	21	23	3	4	3	5
3:00 p.m.	43	47	36	41	34	32	34	33	37	33	35	36
3:30	43	42	52	46	41	39	40	33	36	32	37	32
4:00	47	44	48	46	44	43	40	40	36	31	33	34
4:30	39	44	44	49	37	56	43	44	32	33	45	37
5:00	49	61	62	49	36	40	40	39	30	31	42	34
5:30	55	63	56	56	48	51	52	48	39	36	50	40
6:00	65	66	78	57	49	51	54	53	49	43	54	47
6:30	65	66	78	56	43	45	51	48	44	41	53	45
7:00	55	44	58	59	46	46	52	52	43	38	51	41
7:30	43	41	56	57	54	63	63	61	46	54	59	50
8:00	45	35	46	57	60	54	56	63	56	50	58	53
8:30	39	36	34	41	63	61	57	64	57	55	60	58
9:00	8	8	8	30	52	48	46	49	59	50	57	55
9:30	2	34	10	12	40	30	44	38	51	39	53	52
10:00	-	14	2	5	32	22	32	24	46	34	53	41
10:30	-	2	-	5	25	19	24	21	35	30	48	36
11:00	-	-	-	2	10	9	8	9	18	15	14	15
11:30	-	-	-	-	9	8	8	8	13	10	10	6

differences in the amount of viewing done by children from blue and white collar families nor between our major ethnic groups, caucasians and Mexican-Americans. The small sub-sample of blacks in our town did show the heaviest viewing at each age group.

Using Lorge-Thorndike scores as measures of intelligence, we found results similar to those reported by Schramm et al: at the sixth grade the bright students were among the heaviest users of all media including television. In the tenth grade the brighter students showed less viewing than their age peers. Our differences at the tenth grade level, however, were much less marked than those in the 1959 data.

Another study in this series (Gerbner) has provided the most detailed content analysis of prime time network programs to date. We will not go into that here, but we will review what programs or types of programs our children watched.

We asked the students to name their four favorite programs (Table 3). From their recall diaries of previous day viewing we were able to measure the audience of individual programs Sunday through Thursday for each age group (Table 4).

Among the first graders the most popular programs were situation comedies and cartoon shows. The sixth graders had dropped the cartoons and were giving increased attention to family situation comedies and to adventure programs. The adventure programs dominated the preferences of tenth graders, who had replaced family situation comedies with dramatic and music/variety shows as favorites.

Scrutiny of the lists suggested that children of the various age groups were attracted to shows featuring characters near to them in age. This was further supported by first grade responses to questions on character identification and preference. Black children were also strongly attracted to shows featuring black characters.

The students in this town had two educational stations available. Both were UHF stations, and the vast majority of students indicated that their home sets were equipped for UHF reception. For all practical purposes, however, there was no viewing of either of these stations

Table 3

TWENTY MOST POPULAR SHOWS FOR EACH AGE GROUP

(Number in parentheses is actual number naming show)

	First Grade		Sixth Grade		Tenth Grade	
1	Gilligan's Island	(121)	Gilligan's Island	(215)	Laugh-In	(167)
2	Flintstones	(78)	Mod Squad	(145)	Mod Squad	(134)
3	Lucy	(66)	Laugh-In	(145)	Takes a Thief	(117)
4	My Favorite Martian	(55)	Brady Bunch	(118)	Star Trek	(69)
5	Batman	(54)	Flintstones	(115)	Eddie's Father	(74)
6	Brady Bunch	(45)	Eddie's Father	(117)	Room 222	(55)
7	Hobo Kelly	(33)	I Love Lucy	(106)	Bill Cosby	(55)
8	Bewitched	(32)	Here Come Brides	(87)	Then Came Bronson	(53)
9	Bozo	(25)	My Favorite Martian	(86)	Love American Style	(45)
10	Eddie's Father	(25)	Takes a Thief	(86)	Adam-12	(44)
11	Munsters	(25)	Star Trek	(86)	Here Come Brides	(38)
12	Adam-12	(22)	Room 222	(86)	Disney	(35)
13	Star Trek	(21)	Adam-12	(79)	Dark Shadows	(31)
14	Beat the Clock	(19)	Gunsmoke	(72)	Highway Patrol	(29)
15	Disney	(14)	Bill Cosby	(69)	Gunsmoke	(23)
16	Bill Cosby	(14)	Disney	(69)	Gilligan's Island	(21)
17	Julia	(14)	Here's Lucy	(65)	I Love Lucy	(19)
18	Ghost & Mrs. Muir	(14)	Dark Shadows	(65)	Munsters	(18)
19	Popeye	(12)	Nanny	(58)	Doris Day	(18)
20	Gumby	(10)	Doris Day	(57)	Gomer Pyle	(14)
					My Favorite Martian	(14)
	(N=274)		(N=940)		(N=579)	

FAVORITE PROGRAM CHOICES GROUPED BY TYPE

	First Grade	Sixth Grade	Tenth Grade
Hip Adventure	10%	14%	20%
Situation Comedy	22	17	9
Family Situation Comedy	25	23	9
Cop/Detective	3	5	6
Cartoon/Kiddie	24	5	1
Music/Variety/Talk	3	5	13
Serial Dramas	-	3	9
Dramatic	2	6	13
News	-	1	1
Education/Culture	4	3	2
Western	3	8	7
Game	2	4	2
Sports	-	2	2
Movies	2	4	6

Table 4

MOST POPULAR PROGRAMS FOR THE FIVE TEST DAYS

(% are proportion of each age group who watch the show)

PRIME TIME

First Grade		Sixth Grade		Tenth Grade	
45%	My Favorite Martian*	41%	World of Disney	36%	Bill Cosby
37	I Love Lucy*	41	Bill Cosby	35	Mod Squad
37	World of Disney	35	Bewitched	33	Bonanza
27	Laugh-In	34	Laugh-In	29	World of Disney
21	Bill Cosby	32	Mod Squad	28	Laugh-In
20	Bewitched	29	Bonanza	27	Bewitched
18	Family Affair*	29	I Love Lucy*	22	Dragnet
18	Daniel Boone	26	That Girl	21	That Girl
		26	My Favorite Martian*	19	It Takes a Thief
		24	Julia	19	Red Skelton
		22	Beverly Hillbillies	19	Tom Jones
		22	Red Skelton	18	Mayberry RFD
		21	Mayberry RFD	18	Medical Center
		20	Doris Day	17	Beverly Hillbillies
		19	Here's Lucy	17	Daniel Boone
		18	Hee Haw	17	Then Came Bronson
		18	Courtship of Eddie's Father	17	Mission Impossible
		18	Ironside	15	Ironside
		17	Tom Jones	15	Governor and JJ
		17	Family Affair*	14	Courtship of Eddie's Father
		17	Governor and JJ	14	Bold Ones
		17	Gunsmoke	14	Here's Lucy

SUNDAY DAYTIME

38%	Wonderama	33%	Wonderama
29	Flintstones*	21	Flintstones*
22	Batman*	21	Abbott & Costello

WEEKDAY DAYTIME

48%	Gilligan's Island*	29%	Gilligan's Island*
45	Flintstones*	28	Munsters*
37	Munsters*	26	Flintstones*
31	Hobo Kelly	24	Abbott & Costello
29	Batman*		

*Repeat series.

by students at any grade level.*

Further, there was almost no viewing of news programs, even among the tenth graders. This was particularly true during the 5-7:30 p.m. period when the major daily news presentations are programmed. It should be noted that the largest audiences of young students were gathered in this time period. But the kiddies were watching "Gilligan's Island," "Flintstones," "My Favorite Martian," "I Love Lucy" re-runs, not the news.

One of the intriguing findings of the study was the immense popularity of these programs and their characters among the elementary school age children. They seem content to watch these programs over and over and still over once again.

And what about viewing of violence? In anther study of this series (Greenberg and Gordon), a list of the 20 most violent TV series was established using ratings by a sample of the public and of critics. Of the 20 "most violent" programs 14 were regularly scheduled in ten time slots during the five-day period for which we had viewing records. Thus our youngsters could have watched as many as ten of these programs during the five days.

Examining the records for the students from whom we had viewing records for all five days, we found that the average number of these programs watched at both sixth and tenth grade levels was two. Almost a fourth of each age group saw none of these shows, a fifth of each age group watched four or more. No one saw more than eight.

The differences in the audience won by these programs are interesting (Table 5). Two of them clearly dominated their time slots: "Bonanza" and "Mod Squad," and "Mod Squad's" dominance was particularly pronounced among the tenth graders. "Mission Impossible" and "The Bold Ones" competed against one another. Between them they had over

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*There are also two UHF stations broadcasting almost entirely in Spanish. There was very little viewing of these stations by the Mexican-American students.

Table 5

SHARE OF AUDIENCE GAINED BY "MOST VIOLENT PROGRAMS"
("Most violent programs" shown in capital letters)

	Grade 6	Grade 10
SUNDAY		
9 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	52%	57%
Glen Campbell	14%	12%
BONANZA	57	57
Roller Game	12	10
Movie	12	16
Movie	1	3
Movie	3	2
News	1	1
7 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	41%	36%
Lassie	20%	15%
Wild Kingdom	23	19
LAND OF THE GIANTS	33	31
Showcase Five		2
Rat Patrol*	8	16
Movie	3	5
Star Trek	13	18
10 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	28%	38%
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE	45%	46%
BOLD ONES	34	37
News	2	2
Movie	14	13
Let Me Talk To:	1	1
News	3	1
Labor Report	1	
MONDAY		
7:30 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	54%	46%
GUNSMOKE	25%	20%
My World and Welcome to It	25	18
IT TAKES A THIEF	28	41
Steve Allen	2	6
Movie	3	2
Truth/Consequences	13	10
Perry Mason	4	3

	Grade 6	Grade 10
TUESDAY		
7:30 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	63%	54%
LANCER	14%	10%
Once Before I Die	10	6
MOD SQUAD	54	67
Steve Allen		4
Movie	8	11
Truth/Consequences	11	3
Perry Mason	2	
WEDNESDAY		
7:30 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	63%	69%
Hee Haw	32%	27%
VIRGINIAN	17	25
Steve Allen	2	6
Movie	23	17
Kentuckian*	12	16
Truth/Consequences	11	9
Perry Mason	4	2
10 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	32%	53%
HAWAII FIVE-O	28%	23%
THEN CAME BRONSON	24	40
Room 222	37	27
I Spy*	6	6
News	1	2
News		
Twelve O'clock High	4	1

*These programs, which generally contain considerable violence, were shown as re-runs. The "most violent ratings" were based only on network prime time shows for that season.

Table 5 (Continued)

THURSDAY	Grade 6	Grade 10
7:30 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	61%	50%
Family Affair	30%	26%
DANIEL BOONE	38	34
Steve Allen	2	5
Animal World	9	9
Movie	8	15
Truth/Consequences	10	8
Perry Mason	3	4
8:30 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	64%	58%
Jim Nabors	10%	8%
IRONSIDE	18	26
Boxing	4	3
Bewitched	56	47
Movie	7	11
David Frost	1	2
Big Valley	4	2
10 p.m.		
% of sample viewing	24%	41%
Movie	11%	20%
Grammy Awards	18	36
Boxing	6	3
PARIS 7000	45	14
I Spy	16	24
News	2	1
Major Adams	2	2

80% of the youngsters watching at that time. In another competitive situation, "Then Came Bronson" had almost twice as many tenth grade viewers as "Hawaii Five-O," but Bronson was less popular among the sixth graders. More significantly, "Room 222," which was also shown in this time slot, led both among the sixth graders and was well ahead of "Hawaii Five-O" (but not Bronson) among the tenth graders. "Ironside" was eclipsed by "Bewitched" among both grade groups.

For our present purposes, the point to be drawn is that many of these most violent programs were on the air when there were many young people in the audience--as many as 64% of the sixth graders--and that they frequently did command the greatest share of these young audiences.

Now, let us take a look at the role television seems to play in the child's environment.

Not only does the child spend a large share of his waking hours with TV, but it is also used in connection with other activities. Just as we noted that viewing time begins to decline in adolescence, so there is evidence that the importance of television to the youngsters begins to slide in this period.

About half the first graders said that they use things they've seen on TV as a model for social play "sometimes" or "often." The incidence of solitary play based on TV content was reported by 30%.

Television did intrude on the dreams of these children. Four out of ten of the first graders said that they remembered dreaming about things they'd seen on TV.

Children admitted to having been frightened by TV--40% of the first grade boys, 60% of the girls. It is difficult to say exactly what this means. Many of the shows children mentioned as having frightened them were also their favorites. We must keep in mind that children do seem to enjoy being frightened to some degree.

Things seen on TV provided students at all ages with a major topic of conversation. TV appeared to be more frequently discussed with friends than with parents, among sixth graders than among tenth graders (Table 6).

Table 6

TELEVISION COMPARED TO OTHER CONVERSATIONAL TOPICS

% discussing "sometimes" and "often"	With Friends				With Parents			
	Sixth Grade		Tenth Grade		Sixth Grade		Tenth Grade	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Television	75%	76%	64%	63%	52%	57%	37%	58%
School	79	83	87	92	74	83	66	79
Friends	61	63	58	72	58	69	49	66
Clothes/Fads	42	65	40	74	47	65	51	64
Vietnam	58	39	56	58	56	42	50	55

We asked our sixth and tenth graders how likely they thought they would be to engage in a variety of activities under five different circumstances: when lonely, when angry, when their feelings had been hurt, when they just wanted to relax, when they wanted to be entertained.* Television scored highest relative to other activities for entertainment, relaxation and relief from loneliness. It was a much less likely choice when angry or suffering from hurt feelings.

Again, there was strong evidence that television's personal importance declined with age. Except for entertainment, the percentages feeling that they'd be likely to turn to TV were lower in each situation among sixth than among tenth graders. Among the older students music surged to the front, even in the entertainment category.

Schramm and his colleagues commented on the fact that brighter students among their sixth graders somehow managed to combine large amounts of television viewing with higher than average use of other media. Among our children this held true for the tenth graders as well. The brighter tenth grade students were likely to be high in TV viewing as well as reading and in sports, hobby and social activities. Where we did find a relationship between high TV viewing and decreased social activity was among high viewers who did not also read.

This raises the speculation that perhaps this generation of 1970, the second television generation, has grown up under conditions which have taught youngsters so inclined to accommodate large amounts of television without sacrificing other activities. It is true that there was some evidence of a slight decline in the use of some other media compared to the 1959 levels, particularly reading. But the 1959 levels were already low, particularly among tenth graders.

The most disturbing results in this area we've uncovered so far is that the heavy viewers among first graders did report a lower incidence of after-school play with other children--even though play

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*The other activities were: going to a movie, listening to music, reading, talking to someone, going off to oneself, playing a game.

remained their preferred activity.*

When we looked at our students who stood highest in the number of "most violent" programs watched, we did find some differences.

At both sixth and tenth grade levels the "violence viewers" reported significantly higher levels of conflict with their parents over grades and spending. The sixth graders also had higher conflict with parents over clothes and the way they wore their hair; there were similar but not significant trends among the tenth graders.

At the tenth grade, these students reported a higher incidence of parental complaint about their TV viewing; they were more likely to watch TV when lonely; they were also more likely to accept the people they saw on TV as being like people they meet in real life.

This brings us to the question of attitudes toward and acceptance of television.

The majority of our older children--more than three-quarters--felt that they learned from TV at least some of the time. Nine out of ten of our first grade mothers said their children were learning from television. For the most part they felt this learning was beneficial, although a fifth of them did mention negative aspects. The mothers felt that TV was increasing vocabularies, helping children prepare for school, teaching them "about life."**

Among our mothers the most frequent focus of complaints was, not violence, but commercials.

Nine out of ten of the students at both sixth and tenth grade levels felt there were too many commercials. The majority gave commercials a low vote on credibility.

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*Murray (1971) found higher viewers among a small panel of black boys age 5-6 to be less well adapted socially than their peers who watched less. However, data available on these children showed that they were exhibiting symptoms of poor socialization at the age of three.

**Ward reports that mothers he interviewed said young children had learned to identify packages and brand names before they started to school--and to ask for products they saw advertised.

Most students, even at the first grade level, expressed considerable skepticism about the realism of what they saw on television. It is difficult to attach a value judgment to this result since one might argue that much, if not most, TV content is designed to entertain rather than to present a realistic portrayal of the world.

When we turn to television news--and remember, most students did not watch news--we found that 60% felt that if they saw something on TV news, they could be sure it was true at least most of the time.

In our study, (and also Ward's) the amount of parental control reported was relatively small after the first grade. The majority of our first grade mothers said that they made no effort to restrict the amount of viewing. Three-fourths, however, said that they did try to direct program selection. About a third of the students themselves were aware that their parents tried to restrict their viewing, either now or when they were younger.

Most viewing was done in the company of siblings, parents or both. There was a high incidence of reported conflict with both siblings and parents over program selection. While compromise solutions increased with age, generally the younger party to the conflict deferred to an older person. Among sixth and tenth graders this most frequently meant bowing to parental desires.

What does this mean? We can't say for sure since we did not have measures of parental preferences. It can be hypothesized that this leads to violence viewing just as easily as not. We know that sixth graders continue to be present in large numbers throughout most of prime time, the period in which the more violent series are shown. If the parent or an older sibling wishes to watch the violent program, it appears likely that that will be the program selected.*

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*However, we should note that in comparing Tables 3 and 4 we see that violent programs stood higher in preference than in actual viewing. This may indicate that parental pressures operate to decrease the viewing of such programs.

Another aspect of the intra family dynamics about which we need to know more is the discussion that goes on about television content. We've already mentioned that TV does play an important role as a topic of discussion between students and their parents. Further, students generally reported a high frequency of family talking while they watch TV together. The largest part of this discussion did touch on the program content. To the extent that this discussion does provide the child with appropriate frames of reference or direct interpretation of the content, this may be an important factor in mediating his reaction to the TV stimulus.

An important aspect of television viewing that we must keep in mind is that for the vast majority of children (and adults) most television programs are NOT so absorbing that they receive undivided attention. There appears to be more casual going to the set now than in 1959, more flipping of the dial hunting for something to watch, more turning the set off because "there's nothing on."

Fewer than 20% of our first graders said that they never did other things while watching television. These results are supported by those of Murray and Ward. About half the older students said they sometimes study with the TV set on. Actual attention time seldom equals reported viewing time.*

Now, let us summarize the points which we think you should keep in mind as we listen to the papers which follow:

Compared to children in the same age groups ten years ago, children today are spending more time watching television--or at least in the presence of a TV set that's on.

Levels today seem generally to be flatter across comparisons between SES and ability groups.

Students have become more skeptical about the medium's content and, most emphatically, have become more overtly hostile to commercials,

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*This is documented by Foulkes, LoScuito and, most dramatically, by Bechtel et al.

both in terms of objecting to the number and the content.

Television viewing is hardly ever passive behavior; frequently it is the accompaniment to other activities rather than the focus of attention. Within programs attention rises and wanes perhaps many times.

The importance of television to youngsters declines quite markedly in the adolescent years when they develop new social relationships and increasingly turn to music.

The programs viewed by youngsters are primarily programs produced for adult or family audiences, not specifically for children. The older elementary children definitely are part of the prime time audience. Their viewing is most likely to be concentrated on situation comedies, particularly those focusing on families.

Most children today live in areas where they have a choice of all three networks plus one or more non-network stations as well. Except for the educational stations--which most children do not watch--cartoons, re-runs and old movies constitute the major content on these non-network stations. And many of these programs are among the most popular with young children.

Finally, we must face the fact that parental control of viewing appears to be a relatively weak factor, particularly for children over six years of age. As the number of multiple set homes increases, it is possible there will be erosion in what parental control presently exists.

We have talked primarily about normative use patterns. But there are deviant patterns, among both certain groups and for the same individual under varying conditions. Some of these will be dealt with by our colleagues.

In closing, let us put forth the reminder that our concern over television must encompass both levels: what television's impact may be upon the broad "normal" population and what it's impact may be upon those who are less well prepared to cope with social and personal problems.

Being a mass medium, television's content can reach and influence both.

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